



Testimony on HB 4625

AFT Michigan believes that compensation systems are an essential component of ensuring teacher quality and teacher retention. When implemented effectively, compensation systems that offer additional opportunities for earnings above and beyond a salary schedule can benefit students and lead to enhanced school communities. However, AFT Michigan opposes HB 4625 because this bill does not consider the value of experience and education of those teaching our students.

Teachers' experience and their education levels do matter. We need highly skilled teachers who can deliver standards based instruction. Experienced teachers, through deep practice, have developed the skill sets to improve student achievement. This is why, according to "The Sheepskin Effect and Student Achievement", it takes six to ten years for teachers to make a consistently improve student achievement. Our students deserve teachers who have successfully surmounted the steep learning curve. Moreover, experienced and highly qualified teachers are also best positioned to help their novice colleagues grow.

Teachers with more experience bring important qualities to their classrooms and schools. Raj Chetty, a professor of economics at Harvard University, found that students who have kindergarten teachers with more experience (seniority) do better as adults than those with less experienced teachers. ("How Does your Kindergarten Classroom Affect your Earnings" March 2011). We would also cite a Columbia University Study (2004), citing the positive impact of teaching experience on reading test scores, stating that ten years of teaching experience can be expected to raise both vocabulary and reading comprehension test scores. Among other research suggesting the value of teacher experience is a 2007 Study by Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor from the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research. This study speaks to the impact of various factors, including experience, finding that although the achievement returns are substantial "during the first few years of teaching but returns continue to rise throughout most of the experience range."

This bill uses job performance and job accomplishment as the primary factors rather than a significant factor in determining compensation. This is problematic because these are to be measured by an unproven evaluation system that has not even been recommended yet by the Governor's Council for Educator Effectiveness. Before we tie high stakes decisions to high stakes assessments, we should at least know that our assessment is reliable and valid. Implementing a valid and reliable system is costly and takes time to do well. Furthermore, these types of merit pay systems, where salary is tied to student learning measured exclusively by a test do not work. In 2010 The National Center on Performance Incentives, a project led by Vanderbilt Peabody College, found that offering incentives had no effect on improving test score. In other words the theory that we will somehow get more out of educators by tying pay to student performance measured by test scores has been tested, and does not prove to be true. We need to make the types of educational decisions and investments that will help our students. This may mean implementing additions to our compensation systems, but it doesn't mean replacing the principles behind them.

There are ways to enhance teacher compensation systems that encourage the behaviors that lead to student learning and foster positive learning communities. We should be rewarding teachers who go above and beyond expectations to make contributions that improve the entire school community. This means providing compensation for meaningful mentoring programs that utilize peer to peer coaching and development programs.

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This also includes rewarding those who go through the rigorous process to attain National Board Certification and compensating those who participate in committees and activities that extend beyond the instructional day to improve the quality of education for students and enrich the educational opportunities for children and youth.

The decision to incorporate these factors into salary scale is best made through the collective bargaining process at the local district level. This way districts can develop compensation packages that meet local needs. In some cases, districts may decide to use well designed performance pay in addition to the base salary. In Midland, ESEA, for example, the salary schedule reflects the opportunity to earn additional pay above the base pay increases plus annual performance pay up to \$2000, paid in late spring. Teachers are eligible to advance on the salary schedule with satisfactory evaluations. In Hamtramck and Roseville, as a way of encouraging shared investment in common goals, teachers receive additional compensation when an entire school reaches its performance goals. Building level incentives encourage teamwork and cross-disciplinary collaboration that benefit children.

AFT Michigan also considers the limitations on which advanced degrees can be used as a factor in compensation far too limiting for districts to meet the needs of their students. In January, the Department of Education issued a list of 51 educator shortage areas that were deemed so critical that school districts could hire retirees for up to three years. The list includes, for example, agriculture, biology, mathematics, and Spanish, to name a few. However, the language in (4) (A) would prohibit a district from providing additional compensation to its own teachers to get the undergraduate or graduate degrees needed to meet its students' needs. Also, many of the critical vacancies require special education degrees, generally offered by colleges of education, yet the language in this bill prohibits districts from including these degrees in its compensation package. Furthermore, elementary teachers are limited to "AN ADVANCED DEGREE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION." It is unclear if this includes the various special education critical shortages just mentioned. It certainly does not include degrees in foreign languages, although it is widely acknowledged that foreign language learning is best learned by younger children.

Collective bargaining allows districts to make decisions themselves regarding what education is beneficial to their students. In the Midland ESA contract: "all advanced study hours must be in the employee's scope of job responsibility..." Other contractual language permits both undergraduate and graduate classes needed for specialized employment proficiencies or taken at the request of the Board or deemed "valuable" to the employment assignment. Such language, locally developed, enables districts and their teachers to meet students' needs far more effectively than they could under the limitations that HB 4625 would imposed.

At this point, local school districts and their teachers are taking steps towards enhancing the traditional compensation system and our state is working to develop an evaluation system. AFT Michigan urges this committee to allow those decisions to develop rather than reporting out this untimely bill.

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